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ABSTRACT

This study measures the knowledge that community parents with children between the ages of 16 and 23 have about College of the Mainland; it also measures the accuracy of the college's administrators in estimating parental knowledge. To assess parental knowledge, interviews were conducted with 99 parents randomly distributed across the census tracts in Texas City, Texas. Interview results indicated that parents know that the college is accredited, that its facilities are available for community use, and that financial aid is available. Parents are aware of the comprehensive nature of the college program, of the college's low tuition policy, and of the attention paid to students through counseling and course design. Parents have least knowledge about the college faculty. Administrators at the college were asked to review each of the interview items, and predict parental response. For the most part, the administrators displayed an accurate perception of what parents know about the college. Of the 20 interview items, there were significant differences between parental response and administrator prediction on only six items. The basic interview instrument is included, as are tabulated responses, and a review of the literature. (Author/NHM)

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A COMPARISON OF PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND WITH THE COLLEGE LEADERS' PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE

by
Donald G. Bass

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ABSTRACT

This study measures the knowledge that community parents have about College of the Mainland; it also measures the accuracy of the college's administrators in estimating parental knowledge. An interview schedule was accomplished with ninety-nine parents randomly distributed across the census tracts in Texas City, Texas. Results showed that parental knowledge about the school is very extensive; results also showed that administrators are reading the community parents very accurately.

The study contains survey of the literature of social class and the value that each class has for work, career, and education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT---------- ii

LIST OF TABLES----------v
Mean and t-Tests for Each Questionnaire Item

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ----------1

2. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE----------2

Parental Identity ----------3

Social classes and values----------3

Economic activity----------10

Education ----------13

Familial----------16

Influences on Youth----------19

Student Identity----------21

Student aspirations----------21

Choice of career----------22

Choice of school----------23

Selected student characteristics at COM-----25

3. PROCEDURES AND RESULTS----------27

Definition of Terms----------27

Limitations of Study----------28

Basic Assumptions----------28

Procedures For Collecting Data----------29

Procedures For Treating Data----------34

Results ----------35

Page

Chapter

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS----------39

Recommendation 1 ----------40

Recommendation 2 ----------40

Recommendation 3 ----------40

Recommendation 4 ----------40

BIBLIOGRAPHY ----------41

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table

1. Mean and t-Tests for Each Questionnaire Item----36

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

To what extent are parents knowledgeable about their community college,* College of the Mainland (COM)? Do they have accurate knowledge of the meaning of "comprehensive," for instance? Do parents have a knowledge about costs, facilities, student services, programs, faculty, and location? And, how accurately does the college leadership comprehend the knowledge of parents? Both are unknowns, however, both are measurable. Will parents from different social classes value this knowledge differently?

Hypotheses

HA_1: The mean response by parents for eight or more of the knowledge items on the questionnaire will be less than 3.

HB_2: The parental knowledge about COM will differ significantly with the perception of parental knowledge by college leaders.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The study specifically investigates the extent of knowledge that parents have concerning the college (College of the Mainland, Texas City, Texas) and its programs. The random and stratified sample is 99 parents of college-aged adults. The data gathered, therefore, is distributed across all socioeconomic classes.

For background and significance it would be helpful to inquire into the nature of social classes; that is:

- How and why are social classes identified?
- What occupation and value positions are peculiar to each class?
- What is the class attitude toward education?
- To what extent do parents influence career choice?
- What is the nature and role of the family in each class?
- What are the aspirations of youth?

If the data represents the knowledge of parents of all classes, then it would be enlightening to interpret how each class would use that knowledge and in what way the knowledge would fit into each class value system.

Texas City, Texas is typical of any moderately-sized (39,000 population) American industrial city; therefore, some of the literature of social class organization in the country has been surveyed for appropriate background.

The significance of the study lies in the practical areas of enrollment and service. The college leadership needs to know the answers to several questions. Is the college reaching all that it proclaims to serve? Does it serve each class equally. In what ways could the college improve its service? What needs are peculiar to each social class? How can the college improve the public's knowledge of the institution's program? How much knowledge do parents, indeed, have about the college? This study may provide answers to these questions.

The reader should note carefully that the measure of parental knowledge is hard data; however, observations about social phenomena--parental identity, influences on children, and student identity--are drawn from nationally-based literature. Consequently, comparison, interpretations, extrapolations should be taken with that qualification. Few sociological studies exist of this community. The researcher believes that not only is it important to find out the extent of parental knowledge, but it is equally important to discover who the parents are who are expressing that knowledge.

Parental Identity

For the purposes of the study parents are identified within their social class and value system; they are identified by their economic activity and occupational position. In addition parental identity is described by educational activity and by family structure.

Social classes and values. In his classic study of the control of adolescent behavior, August B. Hollingshead discovered in Elmtown (1949) what may be the genesis of social stratification. He said,

concerning newcomers to Elmtown, "People want to know who they are and where they come from." Members of society want to identify themselves and others in the spectrum of social strata. Hollingshead said that individuals are not content until they have identified others in relation to themselves.

Modern life makes such positional identifications much more difficult than it was. We are more mobile now and there are not as many social benchmarks or icons. As late as 1870 America was 70 per cent rural population. As late as 1940 only 50 per cent of American families were farm families (Congress, 1973). Rural class values ran into conflict with urban values on trade unions, sex equality, and racial integration (Congress, 1973). Further change occurred in employment; by 1972 twenty-one million families had more than one worker in them, representing 55% of all families. Even in the midst of turbulent change Americans maintain methods of identifying and perpetuating social class. Hollingshead's contention is the Americans love the seeming comfort of social stratification more than the American Creed--equality and the pursuit of happiness.

Social scientists have made some assumptions on the methods by which individuals identify class. The reader will recognize most of these as daily fare. We sometimes relegate individuals to a particular class by the following standards:

. White collar work is superior to manual work

. Self-employment is superior to wage-earning

. Clean work is superior to dirty work

. Personal service is degrading

. Importance of business depends on its size (Congress, 1973)

Furthermore, individuals assign prestige in two primary ways. First in importance is the association with the making of the living. That is, a banker is associated with more prestige than a pipe-fitter. The second major way of associating prestige with individuals is by connecting them with family, property, religions, political, educational recreational systems (Hollingshead, 1949). This connection is a very complex, seemingly unscientific way to identify prestige; nevertheless, people manage to do it.

Elmtown, in the Hollingshead study, is a small--7,000 people--a very stable and provincial town. Texas City, Texas is not an Elmtown. The reader may safely assume that Texas City (39,000) is not as highly class-stratified as Elmtown. Here there are more people, who are more mobile and who have fewer communications. In addition, the city is growing in area, population, and economy. Elmtown is the documentary of social class in a fairly static situation At any rate the reader may simultaneously assume that Texas City, Texas has social classes and that the parents of this study belong to those classes.

Hollingshead's classes are a helpful way of inspecting the local stratification. The Hollingshead raters assigned over 700 families to five classes:

. Upper (Class I)
. Upper Middle (Class II)
. Lower Middle (Class III)
. Upper Lower (Class IV)
. Lower (Class V)

Even though this study was made in 1941, published in 1949, the identification and description of each class is obviously valid

and useful.

The upper class (I) is comprised of business owners and old families. Life is leisurely; retreat homes are common. The members of the class marry "equals" and divorce is condemned. Since most occupations are inherited, education is not highly regarded. Personal publicity is avoided; however the group controls political parties. Each family may have two or three cars (1949).

E. E. LeMasters (1970) characterizes the upper-middle (II) as professionals--physicians, dentists, attorneys--who earn 15 to 45 thousand dollars. Their marriages are stable and the husband and wife share authority. They have plenty of resources and are not overly ambitious. Another study speaks of the "large" middle-class: it is not divided (Congress, 1973). This class derives its income from occupation and not from inherited property; this income is devoted partly to display. The class, which is a large expanding one, follows the norms of respectability. Competition is very much a part of its value system; failure is but the midwife of future success. This class believes that everyone should strive for the same lofty ideals.

Hollingshead's Class III, the lower-middle class, has many of the above characteristics; however, their status in the middle class is marginal and tentative. There are more problems in this class than in classes I and II; they are trying hard to stay where they are. Very much is at stake because to fall into Class IV is to enter a class that derives very little opportunity from the social system.

Class III's social problems are represented by higher rates of alcoholism, marital failure, debt, and mental illness. There is less job security, less skill, and less money. The mother often works

full-time (LeMasters, 1970). The family is consumption-oriented because it attempts to buy prestige by conspicious activity; the purchase of furniture, memberships, cars, and clothes are examples. LeMasters says this is the fastest growing group in America, and it is the most miserable. Clerking, service repair, mid-management are characteristic occupations. The pressure is really on this group.

Monroe (1973) does an excellent job of identifying both Class III and IV.

> Class III consists of small businessmen, clerks, white-collar workers, teachers, other less important professionals and skilled workers, especially those in the low management and supervision positions. Class III persons tend to look down upon class IV and class V persons, even though most class III members are only one generation removed from the lower classes. Class III people have accepted middle-class values on morality; home ownership; sanctity of the family, church, and home; hard work and thrift; and getting ahead socially and economically. In general, they represent the conservatives who are eager to preserve the past and to get ahead through education and promotions. The majority of class III persons have finished high school and the parents are zealous for their children's education. Attending a college is almost imperative.
>
> Class IV persons regard themselves as the equals of class III in terms of morals, good behavior, and ambition. In fact, Warner (Karlin, 1967) describes class IV as the "clean poor." They are the skilled and semi-skilled workers who are the backbone of the labor unions. "Their function is to work, to behave themselves, and to keep things going. They are respected for what they are--hard workers who made their own way in life--and not for intellectual, political, economic, or social achievement" (Hollingshead, 1949). Like class III families, class IV families tend to own their homes and cars. Formal education is limited to the elementary grades for the most part. A few have finished high school, and even fewer have attended college. They attend church faithfully, usually going to the Roman Catholic church or one of the Protestant churches which follows the Baptist, fundamentalist tradition. Few belong to social and luncheon clubs. They spend little money on books and travel. The one significant difference between class III and IV parents is in the degree of motivation for their children's going to college and advancing themselves socially. Class III persons are much more the social climbers. The low state of motivation for going to

college among class IV families is reflected in the statistics that among the two upper classes, over 90 percent of the children plan to go to college, but only 44 percent of class III, 28 percent of class IV, and 26 percent of class V children plan to go to college (Karlin, 1967). In this matter, class IV families resemble class V families more than middle-class families.

Attempts have been made to identify the personality types of the different social classes. For class III and IV the most generally accepted personality type by social psychologists is termed authoritarian. Karlin (1967) gives a good description of an authoritarian personality:

> He is insecure, threat-oriented... . Mistrust and insecurity are basic elements in his personality. He appears to be afraid of himself, his impulses, his thoughts, change, and other people in his social environment. He seeks definiteness... . His thinking will take the form of organizing people and events into just two classes: the "good" and the "bad," the "weak" and the "strong." He will say that there is only one right way to do things... . He is an extreme even compulsive conformist. He insists on strict cleanliness, good manners, and adherence to the conventions. He will conform to authority and to the prevailing ideal, but his conformity appears to be irrational and neurotic. He attempts to find security by merging himself completely with the group and submitting to the protection of some higher power or authority.... He is a strict moralist. His thinking is stereotyped and lacking in imagination. The authoritarian's ideas are limited, rigid, and stereotyped. This is not because he is a person of low intelligence, but because his quest for definiteness and his anxiety have rendered him generally incapable of envisioning alternative solutions to problems. He is strictly ethnocentric. The authoritarian person is likely to feel that people who are different are strange, unwholesome, and threatening. He tends to hold the most exalted opinions of his own group and to reject outsiders, but he is governed by feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

The placing of authoritarian behavior in classes III and IV is not difficult to understand. Sanford,(1967) adds to the identification of authoritarian behavior; it is characterized by:

- stereotyped thinking
- intolerance of ambiguity
- punitive morality
- conventionality

. anti-intellectualism

also, "...considerable research shows that the trait of authoritarianism constitutes a particular failure of maturity and is a manifestation of anti-intellectualism" (Trent and Medsker, 1968). Everycne who is familiar with the two year college clientele will be able to appreciate these remarks on authoritarian behavior. Faculty and staff can identify the type daily.

One writer commented on the student body of Macomb County Community College. He said that it is a working class community; the professionals live elsewhere. The students are taking a very tentative step into college and the family is not very supportive. They are not fond of abstractions and their high school study habits are weak (Gross, 1974). The above description would suggest a strong representation of class IV at Macomb and other two year colleges.

The social expectations of class IV's are, according to Hollingshead, "work hard, pay bills, raise the family, vote 'right,' and deny radicalism, and bolshevik ideas." Pertaining to class relations no self-respecting class IV is seen in contact with a class V, who is at the bottom of the social system (Hollingshead, 1949).

Class V's are seen by the rest in the hierarchy as "scum, sexually perverted, vulgar talking, lazy and criminal." They live in very crowded homes, have huge families, perform menial tasks, and drink and fight on Saturday nights. The group characteristically has highest rates of divorce, mental illness, physical disease, and crime (LeMasters, 1970). 46% of the fathers in Elmtown had been convicted in court at least once. Dental neglect is common. Even though the class is pitifully undereducated, it is still very sensitive to

activity above them in the social structure. Hollingshead said, "They desire money, possessions, education, and favorable prestige, but they do not know how these are achieved" (1949).

Parents providing data in this study may be identified by belonging to one of the social strata in the system just described.

Economic activity. The earning ability of the family is another way to describe and identify the parents of this study. Classes I and II are highly resourceful in making money, one through inheritance and control, the other through skill and energy. Class III has little excess income. In Elmtown 42% were proprietors and professionals and 58% wage earners. Class IV income provides necessities only; their work is on farms, in shops, mines, and mills. 30% of the mothers in this class work. Class V fathers are 92% unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. They are considered undesirable workers and bad loan risks, and their families were "hand-me-down" clothes (Hollingshead, 1949).

Texas City, Texas has a very strong economic base, although not highly diversified. Agriculture and petro-chemicals are the base, supported by real estate and construction. In a survey of over 1,000 College of the Mainland students 20% reported parental incomes between $15,000 and $20,000 (Wilkinson, 1974). The American Council on Education (ACE) survey showed the national norm for two-year college students to be only 15.7% for that salary range. A study in an Illinois junior college reported only 12% of the parents making over $15,000 (Monroe, 1973). 33.1% of the College of the Mainland (COM) parents earn from $9,000-$20,000 annually.

The father's occupation in one survey of the COM students showed a high number of skilled craftsmen (Wilkinson, 1974).

	Number	Percentage
Professional	175	13.2%
Managers, Proprietors	110	8.3%
Craftsmen, Foremen	292	22.0%
Operatives	145	10.9%

The ACE survey showed that 30.2% of the COM students' fathers are skilled workers (ACE, 1974). The national percentage for this population is 22.6%.

22% of the mothers work in professional/technical (12.5%) and clerical positions (9.6%), (Wilkinson, 1974). The same study showed that 33.7% of the mothers were housewives. The number of working mothers is continually rising. In 1950 25% of the wives worked; in 1972 40% of the wives worked (Congress, 1973). Local studies with the large number of "no occupation reported" indicate that the per cent of working mothers may be higher than 40%.

COM's students work themselves and give all indications of being en route to financial independence. In the Spring of 1974, 828 students said they would work during the semester, 597 of them planned to work over 30 hours. 72% expressed no need of financial assistance; 67% said that their parents or guardian contributed nothing whatsoever to their college expenses (Wilkinson, 1975).

In summary the economic activity of parents of COM students does help in relating them to a social class. Of the three descriptors---

. father's job

. mother working

. total income

---the first two indicate that the parents relate primarily to classes III and IV. The total family income is somewhat high for these classes, however.

Education. Typically, American society has looked to the institution of education to help associate a social class with an individual. One writer states, "There is a positive association between school social status and college aspirations" (Levine, 1971). This idea alludes to the fact that those in high school who elect to take the college preparation curriculum are identified in the upper social strata. The opposite position is that those students who take "commercial or vocational" curriculum are identified in lower classes. Hollingshead documented this phenomenon over thirty years ago, and it continues to be a strong position in the literature. "...the socioeconomic status position of the nuclear family is positively related to the adolescents educational orientations" (Picou, 1972). Social status and educational aspirations have a mutual and direct-proportion relationship.

The educational system has been used as society's instrument for perpetuating social class. Theodore Caplow writes, "...education has displaced birth, marriage, and property-holding as a determinant of status" (1970). Put another way the recent--for the last thirty-five years--argument supporting inequality of educational opportunity comes to the front. "...education cannot serve as a channel of vertical mobility unless it also serves to exclude those who are not educated in an appropriate way," writes Caplow. Hollingshead described in great detail how the high school in Elmtown served to perpetuate the social organization. All students did not have the same opportunity.

The allegation is further supported by showing the state universities serve as recruiters for upper class industrial and commercial powers-banking, brokerage, accounting (Caplow, 1970). Nevertheless, Caplow notes that increased opportunities in higher education seem to be weakening the use of the university as a means to transfer parental status.

Briefly, the classes do not have the same educational experience and their perceptions of the institution differ. A good example of this diversity of values is the fact that in 1955 62% of all college-aged Jewish adults (U.S.) were indeed, in college;40-50% of the Chinese and Japanese college-aged adults were in college. The national composite figure was 26%. Yet, "In recent years in the U.S. non-whtes have averaged only about 7.9 years of formal education" (LeMasters, 1970).

In analyzing the difference in educational experience within classes, one finds, as expected, that classes I and II expect their children to attend college and "Make good" (Hollingshead, 1949). Class III parents want their own to make good grades, possibly go to college. They want their children to achieve a higher status than their own (Caplow, 1970). The blue-collar attitude about education lies primarily in learning a manual skill (LeMasters, 1970). In most cases, the blue-collar worker is satisfied with a high school education. Hollingshead was quick to point out that many of the class III children do not heed their parents' charge on grades; they fall in with class IV's--"Grades are no big deal."

In the Class III of Elmtown the parents attained the following education level:

- fathers 23% graduates of high school
  86% completed 8th grade
- mothers 63% graduates of high school
  99% completed 8th grade
  10% graduate from college

Parents in class IV think that their children should go to work. School is a drain on the family. If their children do attend school they enroll in agriculture, shop, secretarial or homemaking (i.e. unequal opportunities). The lower classes do not have a value or an experience for education. They don't understand it. Education confuses and frightens them (LeMasters, 1970). Many in this class cannot read and write; they are suspicious of the outside world. In Elmtown 20% of the Class IV fathers finished the eighth grade; 5% finished high school. 66% of the Class V parents quit before the eighth grade (Hollingshead, 1949).

At College of the Mainland (COM) the educational levels of the father, according to one survey, are identified as follows:

8th grade or less	20.4%
some high school	13.4%
high school	23.2%
some college	13.1%
college degree	11.0%

Many reported no educational achievement. According to the figures 47% of the fathers have graduated from high school; 60-80% of the sample had finished the eighth grade (Wilkinson, 1975). Although there are twice as many high school graduates among the fathers, comparing

Texas City and Elmtown, the local characteristics are very similar to Classes III in Elmtown. Furthermore, students identify strongly with working class values when 50% of the student sample say they attend college to prepare for employment and to help with their present job (Wilkinson, 1975). The educational level of COM mothers is such that 50% have graduated from high school, 64-77% have finished the eighth grade, and 8% have college degrees.

From this discussion of the role of education in social classes, this investigator will observe--from education goals, levels of achievement, and values information--that there are very few class I or class V at COM. The social characteristics of the working classes are predominant--Classes III and IV.

Familial. The family is an institution of much impact on American Society. Many consider it the basic unit of society. Certainly, it has a role in the shaping of the behavior and attitudes of its children. There will be an attempt here to look at the class family and to see how it works differently within class organization. Describing the family is another way of identifying the social classes in the local population.

The family structure and role is changing; it is under fire and it has tremendous pressures on it. This is probably true for all families, but it is very critical for the middle and lower classes, however,--the marriage failures occur there, mostly. Evidence of social change is in the deminishing size of the family. Only 5% of the families have three generations in them (Congress, 1973). The great, extended farming families are disappearing.

The role of the father, especially in the middle and lower classes, is riddled with problems. The problems fathers run into are economic and marital. Marital failure is the greatest cause of males failing in the father role; mothers retain custody 90% of the time (LeMasters, 1970). According to Margaret Mead the father role can be dispensed with--in U.S. Culture--after conception. In most cultures, elaborate arrangements are made to broaden the father's role (LeMasters, 1970). According to E. E. LaMasters, the best fathers are "found at the blue-collar level and in the white collar middle class."

The role of the father is especially important in the working classes. Evidence, to date, shows that without his authority, his leadership in the family cannot solve problems.

> For blue-collar families, those (situations) which were father led had higher problem-solving scores than other types of leadership... .
> For white-collar families, problem-solving was at its best when fathers did not play a leadership role. (Tallman, 1974).

Hollingshead noted that in Elmtown's Class III the women made decisions concerning the home, garden, children, and the "social" decisions. Men made economic decisions with the mother's advice.

Some evidence indicates that blue-collar and white-collar families rear their children differently. "Working class parents rear their children to fit the industrial system--white-collar parents teach their kids to operate within the system, to negotiate" (LeMasters, 1970). The white-collar family appears to adjust more easily in education.

The two-year college has many students who are the first from their families to attend college. This new opportunity causes the blue-collar family some problems. According to Alan Gross:

> There is little question that advanced education creates, in the working-class family, and especially between generations, (a complicated) relationship between husband and wife. father and son. Unless these tensions are anticipated or to an extent alleviated, students from working class families will find little family support or incentive for academic success.

Others have identified the increasing number of working mothers as a family problem that is getting worse. In the U.S. one-third of the families have both parents working; however, in black families 70-80% have both parents working (LeMasters, 1970).

Another salient characteristic of the working-classes (i.e. Hollingshead's III and IV) is that marriage occurs early. Gross cited this at Macomb Community College. The age of marriage is inversely related to the classes; for that matter, so is the number of children. 55% of the class V mothers are married before they are twenty; class V girls marry in their middle teens (Hollingshead, 1949).

There is further, and more telling evidence, of pressure on the families of the bottom three classes. The class IV family stability slips, noticeably. One-third of all the families are broken--from death, separation, divorce; the figure is 18% in class III.

Fewer than one-half of the class IV families have bank credit. Many borrow from small loan brokers (Hollingshead, 1949). Class V family situations are even more severe. Their homes have very poor study conditions; it is crowded and there is a scarcity of reading material.

There are few, if any, studies about the family identity of COM's students. There are, however, no reasons to believe that this college serves a much different clientele than any other two-year college. Monroe has identified the two-year college as the

working-man's college. All of the research presented here tends to support Monroe's identification. In addition, the majority of COM's students appear to be members of a class system like Hollingshead's; that is, their economic, educational, and familial characteristics primarily describe members of Classes III and IV.

Influences on Youth

The influences on youth in the making of their educational and career choices are complex. Certainly, those influences occur within the context of social organization just discussed. Among the hierarchy of influences are the family, and the peer group (Monroe, 1973).

Much research has been done on parental influence by Haller, Portes, Kandel, Lesser, Sandis, and others. The research shows that parents have considerable influence on educational goals. One investigator suggests that since parents and children live in the same environment, they may be simply choosing the same goals. A more definitive rationale contends that educational goals are the outcome of the socialization process, and that the family is the major agent of socialization (Mayesk, 1973). According to Baird, "...parental influences are very important" in goal selection (1969). This conclusion is shared by other investigators (Levine, 1971; Monroe, 1973).

More specifically, within the family, the father has considerable influence on the children, the son especially. One writer found that "fathers directly and/or indirectly encourage their sons to develop specific skills which the father himself has acquired." In

addition, the father discourages the development of skills he does not have (Werts, 1970). A good example of this influence is that sons achieve highly in the speech area whose fathers were clergy, actors, teachers, and lawyers. Fathers whose professions involved science had children who achieved highly in science (Werts, 1970).

It is likely that parental influence decreases the older the child becomes (Mayeske, 1973; Sonnenfeld, 1973). However, as the child grows older, his goals tend to agree more with the parents. In fact, the child tends to use the parents' criteria for selecting goals (Mayeske, 1973).

The influence of the peer group should not be understated. most of the change in a student's attitudes and values come by way of the peer group (Monroe, 1973). Even though occupational choices are often made during middle high school, the adolescent's attitudes to toward an adult job are not very serious at that time. Usually, it is later when the adolescent is isolated in youth culture that job choice is made--outside of the family knowledge (Caplow, 1970).

The family and the peer group are two strong and related influences on the adolescent. Nowhere is this fact better exemplified than the following data on COM students. When asked, "How did you find out about COM?"

friends	27.1%
college brochure	23.7%
news, radio, TV	13.9%
parents or relatives	12.1%
counselor	8.6%

when asked, "Who was most influential in your decision to enroll in this College?" The students responded:

parents or relatives	20.1%
friends	18.7%
spouse	12.6%

This data (Wilkinson, 1975) shows the very strong influence of both groups. Socially, it seems that the peer group is used primarily for communication and the family group is influential in decision-making.

Student Identity

At this point the study has described the broad social organization in which this community's parent may find themselves; it has also described two important social influences on children--parental and peer influences. The final section of the survey of the literature will deal with:

- Student Aspirations
- Choice of Career
- Choice of School
- Selected Student Characteristics at COM

Student Aspirations. It is important to keep in mind that students are, for the most part, adolescents, developing into adults. This period in their lives is full of problems which call intensely for solutions and decisions. Charles Monroe (1973) identifies concerns that many two-year college students have:

- marriage
- sex

- vocation
- relationship with parents
- peer group acceptance
- establishing identities

All of these concerns occur coincidentally with attending the community college, being a student, and being a statistic in this literature. Almost all of these areas of concern demand decisions which have life-long implications. The psychological development, a natural maturation, of students is often tragically overlooked in two-year colleges.

Statistically, however, COM students attend because they want immediate employment (36%), or because they want assistance with their current job (19%), or because they wish to transfer to a university (32%). 30% of the students at COM hope to earn the associate degree only (Wilkinson, 1975).

Choice of Career. In Hollingshead's Elmtown (1949) "...jobs the adolescents have and their ideas about desirable jobs reflect significantly their family's position in the class structure." Those in Classes IV and V either are forced to accept or are willing to accept what the class system produces. It should be no surprise that the socioeconomic position of the family influences career choice.

Other highly influential factors are the father's occupation, the father's education, the child's academic performance, and the child's intelligence (Mayeske, 1973; Picou, 1972). Interestingly, litt'e research has been directed at the influence on a female; most studies deal with the parent-son relationship, especially the father-son relationship.

The tradition of inheriting the father's occupation is rapidly fading in American society; it persists to some degree in farm families, however. Concerning the inheriting of occupations, one writer reports that, "...children of manual workers tend to inherit their father's occupation level, or fall below it" (Congress, 1973). Also, the earlier a boy leaves school the greater number of occupations he is barred from.

In Elmtown Class III and IV students predominately chose business (or profession), clerical, and craftsman occupations. At COM, in one sample, 45% of the students (596) have chosen professional and technical areas (Wilkinson, 1975). In another survey, 22% of the students chose business. The COM students career choices seem to be highly related to Elmtown's Class III's and IV's.

Choice of school. Monroe describes the typical community college student as being neither rich, nor poor--lower-middle class in other areas. Parents are skilled laborers, low level supervisors, or industrial managers. Their families want their children to join the white collar and professional class. Family motives are social mobility, and better jobs for the children (Monroe, 1973). Monroe calls the two-year school "The working man's college," or "the people's college." According to Medsker, however, the community college has not reached the lowest social class. Nevertheless, the reader should take note of the "working class, people's college" identity of the community college; this identity would not appeal to the upper class.

Students who choose the two-year college are pragmatic; they are seeking vocational training; the community college is less

"attractive to talented students who are intellectually and academically oriented..." (Richards, 1962). Also, according to Monroe, the two-year college student typically "represents the law and order group, which upholds conventional attitudes toward patriotism, religion, and loyalty to established authority."

One criticism, which apparently comes from the upper class, is that community college instruction is below "standards." The examinations are too easy, and the assignments are too brief (Monroe, 1973). Another investigator found that when the educational level is low there is a greater probability that the student will choose a program in the technical vocational area (Evan, 1972).

There are other criteria for choosing a school. These are:

- distance
- cost
- transportation
- school program
- friends attending
- physical plant (Sonnenfeld, 1973).

At COM, one large sample, students indicated their reasons for enrolling in the following priority ranking.

- live at home (1, 482)
- low cost (1,365)
- interest in program (1, 072)
- can continue work (944) (Wilkinson, 1974).

The "working man's college" is a very accurate identity for COM.

COM public information program concentrates and capitalizes on these motivations. There is however, one very vital implication for

public information; this implication lies in the very complex relationships between social classes. Apparently, the judgment of good and poor college is established by the upper classes and transmitted to the lower classes. According to Christopher Jencks, "The perception of a good school in the poor people's eyes is the school rich people want" (Sonnenfeld, 1973). The challenge that community college public relations finds itself is that it must establish credibility in the upper classes, which now sees it as a working class, somewhat second-class operation.

Selected student characteristics at COM. Finally, there are a few characteristics which add some uniqueness to COM's students. One survey revealed that 85% (1,065) drive their own vehicle; 47% indicated that they would work more than thirty hours during a given semester; 60% live in their own homes or apartments (Wilkinson, 1975). These statistics point out the fact that generally the COM student body is economically strong.

This study has attempted to establish the idea that social classes exists in the COM district, that parents see the institution from vantage points all along the spectrum of social order, that experience, values, and attitudes are very different along the spectrum.

Hollingshead concluded that social stratification was an evil that perpetrated inequality and privilege, but he said that it was something that Americans embraced--even though it conflicted with the American creed. He claimed that class social order had survived reformers, revolutions, wars, and legislation for over 200 years. He

said that the American people apparently loved the class system more than they loved the American creed. From this writer's point-of-view, Hollingshead is an important antecedent for the current argument about inequality in education, as it is being described by Coleman, Jencks, and others.

In addition to relating the class system to COM's district this study has attempted to describe the nature of parental and peer influence as it affects a student's aspirations, a student's choice of career, and his choice of school.

This information can now be used to evaluate the relative importance of parental knowledge about College of the Mainland and its programs.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

Definition of Terms.

Community College - A public institution of high learning which is characterized by a variety of programs, open admission, student services, and flexible response to unique community needs; in this case College of the Mainland, Texas City, Texas

Comprehensive relates to a broad spectrum of educational programs (i.e. technical, vocational, college preparatory, continuing education) The comprehensive college is not just college preparatory.

Parents - Mothers and fathers of young, aged 16 through 23.

College - College of the Mainland, Texas City, (mainland, Galveston County); 2,000 credit student; comprehensive

Population - parents of Texas City, Texas; 20 administrative leaders

Sample - 99 parents

Leader - used as a classification term; in this sense a college leader is defined by position-a president, dean, associate dean, or chairman.

Knowledge - cognitive, factual data--as opposed to attitudes, feelings, or beliefs.

Needs assessment - an evaluative study for discovering what citizens need.

Limitations of Study.

1. The decision was made to use the questionnaire without pilot-testing it. It was revised several times, however. Pilot-testing to find non-descriminating items or too easy/difficult items did not seem to apply.
2. The use of the interview for collection was considered least reliable; however, it appeared to be the only practical way to do this. Interviewers were trained, however, and were not able to have free conversation until the data was collected. The research designer saw the interviewer more as a messenger who delivered a questionnaire.
3. The college administrative leadership is not basically a researched-based group. They fill out a great many questionnaires, and deal with a great quantity of verbiage and problems; it is possible that they saw the study as undistinctive.
4. The interviewers were inexperienced.
5. Data collection is viewed very suspiciously at this college; recently a researcher administered a questionnaire which was supposedly anonymous. The instrument was coded, however. The code was discovered and everyone now is leary of questionnaires, which was a limitation for this study.

Basic Assumptions.

It is assumed that:

1. The questionnaire is an accurate measure of basic knowledge about the institution.

2. The sample is random.
3. The knowledge items are worth knowing on the parents' part.
4. The responses are data that have a normal distribution.

Procedures For Collecting Data.

The questionnaire items were collected from deans within the college who are responsible for major programs. Items were reversed at random to avoid response bias; items were also sequenced randomly so that questions on any single program were not juxtaposed.

Here is the instrument:

FOR PARENTS OF THE
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND
UNION DISTRICT

All of these statements concern College of the Mainland and its activity. If you know a statement is true, then circle, Agree, number 1. If you know a statement is not true, then circle, Disagree, number 5.

(Concerning College of the Mainland)	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Undecided	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree
1. Books, tuition, and fees cost less than $200 for a semester.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Normally, fewer than 200 students attend evening classes.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Any person over eighteen or who has graduated from high school can be admitted to the college.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The facilities are not available for community use.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The faculty comes from other states as well as Texas.	1	2	3	4	5
(Concerning College of the Mainland)	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Undecided	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree
6. The college has a basketball team.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The learning programs are designed to help students meet specific objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There are no courses for adults--like ceramics, typing, or conversational Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The college is not governed by a Board of Trustees.	1	2	3	4	5

(Concerning College of the Mainland)	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Undecided	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree
10. Adult courses cost quite a bit, over $25 a course.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is a program for basic literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The college is accredited.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Personal counseling is not available to students.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There are no technical-vocational programs, like welding, drafting, and automotive.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Credit courses transfer to four year schools.	1	2	3	4	5

(Concerning College of the Mainland)	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Undecided	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree
16. There are pre-professional programs, like nursing, law, and engineering.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Financial aid is not available to students.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The college is located on Palmer Highway near the Gulf Freeway.	1	2	3	4	5
19. A minority of the college faculty has master's degrees.	1	2	3	4	5
20. A minority of COM's students work, full or part-time.	1	2	3	4	5

Census Tract_____; Block Number_____

Would you answer questions like these through the mail, in order to help the college meet community needs better? Yes [], No []

If yes, please write:

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Interviewers were students from a speech class; each interviewer role-played the interview. The goal was to complete approximately twenty interviews in each of the Texas City census tracts. Here were the interviewer's instructions:

1. All interviews are in Texas City in census tracts 1216, 1217, 1220, 1221, 1222.
2. Blocks will be picked at random.
3. There may be only one to two interviews on each block.
4. The interview is for parents only; only one parent from each home can participate.
5. Introduce yourself. "Hello, I'm name . I am asking a few questions about College of the Mainland. Can you give me a minute or two?" "These questions are for parents only. Do you have a son or daughter living here between the ages of 16 and 23?"
   If the answer is "no," you should ask the person to refer you to one or two parents on the same block.
   If the answer is "yes," hand the parent the questionnaire and ask him to fill it out. Do not talk to the parent other than helping the parent read the questionnaire.
   You may answer other questions after the form is completed.
   Thank the person for participating. Fill in the census tract number, address and descriptive data after the interview is complete.

It took two months to collect the data (November, 1974 and January, 1975).

Procedures For Treating The Data.

To test H_1 it was only necessary to calculate the mean for each item on the parental responses. The negative items were returned to their positive form.

To test H_2 it was necessary to compare the two samples on each item (20) by applying a t-test. Differences at the .05 level of confidence were accepted as significant.

Results.

HA_1 is:

The mean response by parents for eight or more of the knowledge items on the questionnaire will be less than 3.

A response of 3 represents the neutral position; 1 represents full knowledge of the item; 5 represents no knowledge of the item. In the table below Group 1 is the random community sample (N-99); Group 2 is the college administration leadership (N-20). 117 degrees of freedom were used to establish the t-value.

TABLE 1

Mean and t-Tests for
Each Questionnaire Item

Item	Group	$\bar{X}$	S	t
1	1	2.56	1.5	2.11*
	2	1.80	1.32	
2	1	2.62	1.33	1.92*
	2	2.0	1.29	
3	1	2.07	1.44	.49
	2	1.9	1.33	
4	1	1.78	1.35	-1.25
	2	2.20	1.32	
5	1	2.3	1.41	1.34
	2	1.85	1.22	
6	1	2.07	1.32	1.01
	2	1.75	1.11	
7	1	1.54	1.0	-5.27*
	2	3.0	1.48	
8	1	1.85	1.4	.78
	2	1.60	.94	
9	1	2.0	1.22	1.72*
	2	1.5	.94	

Item	Group	$\bar{X}$	S	t
10	1	1.62	1.22	-.59
	2	1.80	1.10	
11	1	2.39	1.27	.31
	2	2.30	1.12	
12	1	1.66	1.29	-1.20
	2	2.05	1.35	
13	1	1.36	.78	-5.64*
	2	2.60	1.31	
14	1	1.47	1.11	.68
	2	1.30	.65	
15	1	2.10	1.44	-.84
	2	2.40	1.42	
16	1	1.66	1.06	-4.17*
	2	2.85	1.53	
17	1	1.80	1.15	-.33
	2	1.90	.96	
18	1	1.33	.75	1.01
	2	1.15	.67	
19	1	2.78	1.48	1.34
	2	2.45	1.27	
20	1	2.69	1.56	-.14
	2	2.75	1.37	

*There is a significant difference in the means for the two groups for this item at the .05 level of confidence.

HA_1 is very definitely confimed. The mean for all twenty items for the parents was below 3; parents are knowledgeable about the college and its programs.

HB_2 is:

The parental knowledge about COM will differ significantly with the perception of parental knowledge by college leaders.

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the two groups. The null was rejected for Items 1, 2, 7, 9, 13 and 16 where the calculated value of $\underline{t}$ exceeded the critical value.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that parents in the community are generally knowledgeable about College of the Mainland and its programs.

More specifically parents know that the college is accredited; its facilities are available for community use; financial aid is available. Parents are aware of the comprehensive nature of the college program and they are aware of the attention paid to students through counseling and course design. Parents also know that the college is working to keep the cost of education within reasonable reach.

The one area which parents had the least knowledge concerned the faculty. Although parents exhibited acceptable knowledge about the faculty, their lowest mean ratings were in this area.

It was also obvious from the findings that the administrative leadership has an accurate perception of what parents know about the college. Only on six items were there significant differences.

On items 1, 2, and 9 the administrative leadership thought that the parents had significantly more knowledge than they actually had.

Parents did not know as much about enrollments, tuition or college governance as the admistrators assured.

On the other hand, on items 7, 13, and 16 the parents had significantly more knowledge than was expected. All three of these items deal with the instructional program; they concern counseling, course design and pre-professional programs.

Recommendation 1

The public information office should reduce the amount of released news on topics where parents have substantial knowledge. These topics can be identified by using the findings of this study and the findings of a private research group (RTI).

Recommendation 2

The public information office should increase its priority for focusing on the college faculty.

Recommendation 3

The public information office should use the design developed for this study for collecting community data. It should continue sampling such a group of citizens so that it can continually acquire feedback on the effectiveness of its programs among the many populations in the community.

Recommendation 4

COM's students should become active in small, well-defined sociological research in the local community. Research questions should be developed by administrative leaders, faculty, and students.

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